

COMMENTS ON PRESIDENTIAL YEAR 1967 - G.H. COWAN.

You will note that at the beginning of Legatee Isherwood's comments, written at the conclusion of his year, he mentioned that this book is now reaching a stage where the necessity for each successive President to write at length is no longer necessary.

I agree in principle with almost all Legatee Isherwood has written and do not propose to reiterate, but to give some brief personal observations. Neither do I propose to give an itemised list of various functions throughout the year; that prepared by Legatee Dore following his year in office seems sufficient general briefing.

I have followed the pattern set by Legatee Isherwood in the order of priorities along the line (a) Melbourne Legacy, (b) Groups and Branches, (c) other Clubs, and have used discretion regarding activities outside Legacy. I believe that some "outside Legacy functions" expect and deserve the President's attendance if it is possible. Many others can well be delegated and some declined.

I was well aware of the suggestions made to reduce the demands on the President but I found it difficult to put this into practice. I do not believe that any President should set a pattern or pace for his successor and, personally, was not over-governed on what Legatee Isherwood had done during his term of office. I made every effort to attend Annual Dinners where it had not been possible for him to attend in the preceding year. I think I was conscious of the relatively short period in office and therefore tried to attend as many functions as possible. I wish to emphasise, however, that this is certainly not necessary and must be governed entirely by circumstances.

I seriously suggest that you look closely at the chart of past attendance in this book and plan well ahead - for the best laid plans of mice and men, etc ... - and you must always be prepared for last minute changes. I certainly had many. You will be requested to fix dates well in advance for visits to Residences, preferably early in your year of office, and Boys' and Girls' Classes presentation of certificates. Some of these pre-determined dates are invariably upset by unexpected invitations and a Vice-President will then have to attend in your place. I found that in attending Residences and Classes, and speaking to Junior Legatees it was preferable to adopt a relaxed attitude and talk with them rather than address them.

The luncheon with the Press is arranged early in your year and the President is the only speaker. I found it necessary always to be careful when addressing or talking privately with any member of the Press. You must be sure of your facts as you never know when you may be reported.

One of your first major official functions will be the School Children's Anzac Commemoration Ceremony at the Shrine of Remembrance and it is wise to start preparing for this early. It is also wise to attend at least one meeting of this committee prior to the day, and I had a run over the course the day before with the Chairman of the Committee.

In past years the dignity of some Club and Group Annual Dinners has been marred by an occasional risqué story and many Presidents have effectively discouraged this. I found relatively little of it, but was not backward in condemning it later on the few occasions it occurred. I found that statistics and figures were not well received at Annual Dinners but suitable true stories, particularly of Junior Legatees and Senior Widows and what Legacy had been able to do for them, made a greater impact. I started early in accumulating a file for this purpose.

Although I have heard one or two outstanding toasts to Legacy I have followed the lead of my predecessors by discouraging this toast and substituting the Story of Legacy. I suggest you always be well briefed regarding the incoming Presidents or Chairmen and V.I.P's attending meetings. Make sure that Norma knows the names of the wives of the outgoing and incoming Legatees. Anne attended every country dinner with me and was fortunate in always having some Melbourne wives with her.

During my year in office I attended very few committee meetings in Legacy House, but lunched with most committees and left shortly after their meeting had commenced. I found the members of the various committees knew more of the problems in hand than I and were better equipped to cope.

I wrote only personal letters and arranged for all other letters to be written by the Executive Officer, Finance Secretary or Legatee concerned and they were left for my signature.

I tried not to become personally involved in matters but worked as far as possible through the committee chairman or a selected Legatee.

Before Tuesday Luncheons it has been my practice throughout the year to look at the Guest Speaker and invite to the Board room one or two Legatees who may know him or have something in common with him.

I have also made a practice of inviting one or two members of the Club. There has always been a standing invitation to all Vice-Presidents, the Honorary Secretary, the Honorary Treasurer, immediate Past-President, etc. The Legatee introducing the Guest Speaker normally meets him and brings him to the Board room. Your orderlies arrange ~~his~~ ^{the} seating at the head table. I suggest you make sure you are well versed in the induction ceremony as you may be called upon for an induction very early in the piece.

It is wise to check on the dress for all "outside Legacy functions". I was caught on one occasion as the Guest Speaker and the only person present in a lounge suit.

When visiting country clubs and groups it is well to be briefed on what they are doing for Melbourne Legacy in the way of provisioning of Residences, firewood, camps and holidays, and the like, and this is a good opportunity to thank them. If your liaison officers are efficient this will be done automatically.

Legatee Isherwood mentioned in his report some shortcomings on the part of one or two clubs and groups. Each does the job in its own way, some better than others, but on the whole I found the work of Legacy was being carried out efficiently throughout Victoria.

One of the responsibilities which worried me most was the Federal Conference, probably because I had not attended many. I doubt whether I gave this sufficient preparation and suggest you might take wise counsel, particularly if there is anything contentious on the agenda.

In the event of the death of a Legatee it is customary for the President to attend the funeral and, in some cases, conduct the Legacy service. The form of this service is set out in the Code. At some later stage the President normally calls upon the widow of the deceased and, if necessary, appoints a visiting contactor.

There is a great deal of valuable information in this book which relates to President's Fund, secret Membership Committee, and many other matters which are not generally known to members of the Club. It is wise to familiarise yourself with all these matters at your earliest convenience.

You will find Ivan Layton a terrific help; his experience and knowledge of Legacy is great and he will always be willing and ready to assist you. This also applies to every member of the staff in Legacy House. I suggest you remember that although there may be ~~a~~ differences of opinion, which is to be expected in any organisation as large as Legacy, every member of the Club is there to back you up and no problems are insurmountable. No immediate Past President wishes to intrude on the President of the year, but I assure you I will be handy and ready and willing to advise, assist or deputise if I am called upon

to do so. It is obvious after reading through this book that some Presidents have gone to a great deal of trouble in compiling information on many matters. I have not attempted to do this, but jotted down thoughts as they came to mind. I hope they will be of some assistance to you.

Gowan
12/2/68.